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NEW LIFE IN CHINA.

BY THE HON. JOHN RUSSELL YOUNG, FORMERLY UNITED STATES
MINISTER TO CHINA.

MUCH is written in these current days about China. Stories of misadventure, riot, and misfortune ; of secret societies ; of a revival of the Tae Ping rebellion ; of plots against the dynasty ; of the harrying of the poor devoted missionaries ; the sad lesson devolving upon them, as it has devolved upon many holy men who have gone before them—that those who follow the cross must, on occasion, bear the cross ; sporadic unrest throughout the empire ; appeals to domestic patriotism against the foreign devil ; and—what concerns the American more than anything else—the steady diminution of American influence, until the flag, which in the days of Burlingame had the prestige almost of a protectorate in Peking, which at one time was the dominant flag in Chinese commerce, has no authority beyond certain domestic offices at the consulates and legation. We may well ask what it means ! I should call it the awakening of the new life in China.

“The European war,” said John T. Delane, the late eminent editor of the London *Times*, at the close of the late conflict between Germany and France, “has minimized Continental events for a long time. Asia is now the field. The coming question will be Asiatic. It belongs to the next generation. I should advise my younger friends to bend their thoughts in that direction. It may come with the youngest and the oldest civilizations—the United States and China—face to face ! It may come with Russia as an important factor. But it will come, and there is more involved in its solution than in any apparent Continental issue now.”

The fading-away of American influence in China, our first immediate interest in studying these phenomena, is not to be viewed without concern. The failure of Russell & Co., the

latest news from China of special import to us, is not alone a mere commercial incident. The Russells went back to the early part of the century, to the time when Astor and Girard were in the China trade, when the East India Company was a political as well as a commercial power. From the Russell enterprises came some of the great fortunes of modern commerce. Because of their commercial genius the American flag has been seen in every part of China. They saved Chinese prestige when it was threatened by France. There was a time, and that not far away, when China would not have permitted the failure of this house any more than the English money power would have permitted the failure of the Barings. It was when China, pressed by French invasions in Annam, restless under German aggression at Swatow, fearing Russian encroachments on the Mongolian frontier, and apprehensive that England might make Port Hamilton, in the North, what Hong Kong had been so long in the South, saw in the United States the one strong power whose advice could by no chance be inimical to her interests, and in a venerable and far-seeing American house a commercial representative of American ideas.

I have seen no reason to attribute the Russell failure to the caprice or emergency of commerce. There are houses like those of the Barings and the Rothschilds that cannot be permitted to fail, at least for purely commercial reasons. The house of Russell belonged to this category. There were two influences only that could have destroyed it: one was the opposition of British interests; the other, the decay of American influence because of the indifference or animosity of China.

The antagonism of British interests is, I presume, to be expected in the East, at all events upon the theory that sentiment has no place in business. The student of our American financial system cannot fail to note the curious fact that while American policy, American money, and American financial influence have been concentrated upon the advancement of British commercial power in the West, British policy, British money, and British financial influence are prompt towards the destruction of American commercial power in the East. It was only the other day when the resources of the United States were strained and business embarrassed to save the London money market from the consequences of London follies in the Argentine Republic. And

yet at the time when the firm hand of New York was steadying the reeling credit of London the hand of London was tearing down the American flag from the last of our great establishments in the East. Under any just appreciation of what belonged to American prestige on the Pacific, with any reasonable protection from the government, with a fraction of the aid, moral and otherwise, which Great Britain bestows upon her interests all over the world, and especially in China, this disaster, political as well as commercial, would never have taken place.

Why should China have permitted what is for the present the extinction of American commercial influence in the East? In 1885 the American flag was on every coast and in every navigable stream of China, covering the largest commercial fleet in the East. That represented the good feeling between the two nations. Now it may be found, if at all, upon some poor forlorn petroleum tramp steamer edging its way towards unfriendly wharves. Let the answer be found in the fact that in our dealings with China we have maintained a policy of contumely which finally has awakened perhaps the last emotion to be aroused in the Oriental mind—the emotion of self-respect. Take the emigration question. There has never been a time when China would not have gone further to suppress emigration than our extreme friends in California could have demanded. We must, however, impugn the good faith of the Chinese in carrying out a policy which they themselves initiated and volunteered, and treat them in a manner that any other power would have regarded as an invitation to war. We must do this, and at the same time expect from China the benefits of amity and a complete harmonious understanding.

Let me illustrate our persistence in this strange, perverse policy. A recent Washington decree directs that any person of a presumably Chinese origin who does not possess certain tokens or papers shall be returned to China as “the country from which he came.” It was at one time within my personal knowledge, and I have learned of no official evidence to the contrary, that there was no record in any executive department of Washington of a Chinaman coming to the United States from China. From British possessions, like the Straits Settlements, where their kinsmen have lived for a century or two; from the Dutch colonies in Java; from Hong Kong, as much of a

British possession as Londonderry,—but in no instance from China. Have we any right, then, to send to China people who have abandoned that country and the protection of its flag? Would we return presumable Englishmen to Liverpool who had come to us from Havana or St. Thomas, because they were apparently of the Anglo-Saxon race? Would England permit it, or allow to pass without protest an executive order which, with the knowledge in executive departments that Englishmen did not come to the United States, could deport whoever were supposed to be Englishmen to Great Britain?

This may be a small, perhaps a technical, matter—a trifle to come between nations. But history shows that nations—wayward as women or children—are rarely disturbed except by small things. The trifle is the spark, and the spark soon becomes the flame. If there are reasons, the gravity of which I admit, which lead us to select the Chinese as the one Asiatic race that may not come to the United States; to welcome the Malay, the Arabian, the Hebrew, the Hindoo, the Japanese; to permit easy and unrestrained access, with special protection even, to the subtlest commercial intellects of Bombay and Constantinople, Jerusalem and Osaka, but to forbid those who come from Canton,—if such reasons exist, they may be explained, and with entire truth, as an indirect compliment to the intellectual power of the Chinese artificer and merchant. But having secured our restrictions and limitations, having done so with the assent of China, is there not every reason why we should maintain the closest political and commercial relations? The Chinese are our nearest neighbors. The ocean between us is not as wide as the ocean to Liverpool twenty years ago. China craves as necessities our cotton goods and petroleum. The cotton grows on our plantations; the petroleum comes from our caverns. There is no reason why the entire China trade, under a judicious system of political sympathy, might not be one of the most valuable assets in the sum of American maritime greatness. We have but to show China that we have no American interest in the East, aside from the Sandwich Islands, so near to us as the autonomy of her empire; that her independence is essential to our commercial strength in the Pacific; we have but to promulgate Monroe Doctrine in the East upon the lines laid down by Quincy Adams as pertinent to the Gulf of Mexico and the South American republics, to have

a moral weight in her destinies which no other power could hope to emulate or venture successfully to deny.

About the time the emigration business was coming to a head, and we were trying as well as we could to arrange the treaty of Mr. Trescot and Mr. Angell, we had our experiment with Corea. Since Solouque became Emperor of Hayti, with his Count of Marmalade, his Duke of Lemonade, and other fantastic creations, to the amusement of the cynical world, we have had no diplomatic travesty so grotesque as this in Corea. To us Corea should be as much a part of the Chinese Empire as Maine is a part of the United States. Our "treaty" with Corea was the transcript of an instrument dictated by the Chinese viceroy at Tientim. The convention itself recognized a dependence upon China as absolute as that of Massachusetts upon the republic. It was thought that Japan would be pleased to have Coréa independent, or under her protectorate even, although I never knew a Japanese statesman who did not regard the ocean as a barrier as welcome against China as it is to England against the Continent. Russia was the only nation that could be served by an autonomous Corea, and the practical effect of the treaty was to place the United States in the position of an active instrument for the furtherance of Russian intrigue in Asia. This opinion, strengthened in China with so many abundant opportunities of observation, is confirmed by recent intelligence. A correspondent of the *New York Times*, writing from Shanghai on July 2, 1891, says: "Russian political agents have been steadily but secretly at work, for some time, throughout the entire peninsula, gradually preparing the people for the rule of the Czar"; and "Corea will pass from the list of the kingdoms of Asia and will become a province of the mighty Russian Empire."

When the substance of this proposed treaty was shown to me by Mr. Frelinghuysen in 1882, I expressed to that statesman the views I am now writing, and which I have never ceased to hold. In this opinion I was sustained by the illustrious authority of General Grant. The treaty, however, was signed precipitately, before I could reach Japan, and since then we have had no more difficult problem than this of Corea in our relations with China. The comedy of a mission to that country, of an actual legation there, of military experts to organize the Korean army, of a diplomatic adviser to direct the foreign affairs of the kingdom—all of

this would have been merry enough in one of the operas of Mr. Offenbach or Mr. Gilbert, or as a bit of *Soulouquerie* unrivalled ever since the poor old Haytian blackamoor with his *Lemonades* and *Marmalades* vanished amid undissuadable laughter. Amusing as it was, unhappily our relations with China were a most serious business. Whatever there was to us of negro minstrelsy and opera bouffe in our relations with Corea, to China it meant the shadow of the Great White Czar, moving towards a destiny ominous to China—moving under the inspiration and authority of the United States.

The policy of General Grant to which allusion is here made, and which governed the instructions with which I was honored by Mr. Frelinghuysen when I was in the diplomatic service, was based upon a careful study of the eastern question amid advantages such as no other foreigner ever enjoyed. It was a policy developed after careful study and confidential conversations with the Prince Regent and ministers of China, the Emperor and ministers of Japan. It was my privilege to be present at these interviews, and to know how deeply the ex-President was impressed by what he heard and saw. "What I would give," he said to me one afternoon at Enriokwan, as, walking in the gardens of the Emperor, we looked out upon the sea, "—what I would give to have known ten years ago what I know to-day!" What might he have given indeed, and what might America have given, had the just, intrepid policy towards the eastern nations which the genius of Grant evolved from the political conditions of the Pacific found fruition and encouragement, or been governed by his firm, enlightened will! In that lay the solution of the emigration question upon terms that would have satisfied all reasonable interests, no matter how conflicting; the maintenance of that commercial supremacy so necessary to our Pacific empire; the peaceful trending, under enlightened guidance, of the surplus populations of the Middle Empire towards the vast islands and continents wherein they could have the opportunity our own races have found in America and Australasia. There would have been no *Soulouquerie* in Corea, no hauling down the flag from our great establishments in the East. Hand in hand the oldest and the youngest of civilizations could have pursued their destiny, the genius of antiquity resting upon and strengthened by the genius of youth.

I presume this will be called a dream, even if it comes from the calmest and strongest head known in these modern American days. What General Grant, however, expressed in the freedom and vividness of personal intercourse, was spoken no less in public addresses wherein he weighed every word. "America," he said in one public speech, delivered to a company of Oriental noblemen, and memorable for the impression it made at the time, "—America has great interests in the East. She is your next-door neighbor. She is more affected by the eastern populations than any other power. She can never be insensible to what is doing here." "America has much to gain in the East ; no nation has greater interests ; but America has nothing to gain except what comes from the cheerful acquiescence of the eastern people and insures them as much benefit as it does us. I should be ashamed of my country if its relations with other nations, and especially with these ancient and most interesting empires in the East, were based upon any other idea."

And, again, upon an occasion even more memorable, when taking leave of the Emperor of Japan, General Grant addressed His Majesty in these weighty words : " It is my sincere desire to see Japan realize all possible strength and greatness, to see her as independent of foreign rule or dictation as any western nation now is, and to see affairs so directed by her as to command the respect of the civilized world." The importance attached to this declaration by General Grant may be inferred from the fact that before seeing the Emperor he wrote his speech. I was with him at the time and read these words from his manuscript.

If, therefore, it be a dream, it was that of an intrepid, original, wise man, impressed with what he saw, with the new and strange conditions surrounding Oriental life, its perplexities and its hopes, its helplessness as that of childhood, its strength with the matured wisdom of many centuries ; now and then bursting upon you with an appalling sense of knowledge and power. He had seen India and what men of our race have done in the forging of that vast empire. He had seen Egypt and what the same men were trying to do in that strange, mysterious, pathetic land. He had seen that, for every material advantage given to India, something of artistic, spiritual value—higher, perhaps, than material advantage—had been taken away. He had seen the art, the poetry, the culture, the sen-

timent of ingenious races stamped out under the influence of the sword and the spinning-jenny; he had seen how an empire was governed in Calcutta and Bombay for dividends and pensions in London; he was to see the swift progress in Japan of a "civilization" which might in time be a blessing, but thus far had shown only the symptoms of a disease; and he respected, as no one who looks deeply and sympathetically into the matter can fail to respect, the proud reserve of China, which prefers the traditions of the ages to the experiments of a day, which will not exchange the morals of Confucius for those of the London *Times*, and whose civilization when it moves will do so with the slow strength of the glacier, and not the turbulence of the rushing stream.

The beginning of the new movement in China, the awakening of the new life which, to my mind, underlies so many of the sporadic conditions of present unrest in the empire, may be attributed to the influence and personal character of Li Hung Chang, the Viceroy of the northern provinces, and virtual Prime Minister. From his Yamen come the ideas which slowly permeate the empire. When I was familiar with China, Tientsin, the home of the Viceroy, was ever the centre of a unique and progressive authority. The atmosphere of the Viceroy's Yamen was different from that of Canton, Foo Chow, Wuchang, or elsewhere. To pass from Hankow to Tientsin was like coming from China of the middle ages to what one might call the China of the nineteenth century. The personal qualities of the Viceroy had much to do with it. "I have seen," said General Grant to me on one occasion, "four great men in my journey—Bismarck, Beaconsfield, Gambetta, and Li Hung Chang. I am not sure that Li is not the greatest of the four." A friendship—I might say an intimacy—with the Viceroy for some years confirmed with me an opinion akin to this of General Grant. A strong, positive, dominant nature, with a firm will, an irascible temper, he had seen much of the foreigner, and—what the earnest Chinaman never thinks of doing—had adjusted the perspective, as it were, between his own and foreign lands. He had governing qualities. The soft, tranquil nature, the morrow and ever the morrow temperament which marks the Oriental, was foreign to him. Unlike any other Chinese statesman whom I then knew, he believed in war and in preparation for war. The one question which seemed to interest him was the military possibilities

of the empire. The one ruler who impressed his imagination was Grant, because he saw in him the soldier. Although a singularly accomplished man, and in times of peace assured of advancement even in China, where education means promotion, he had risen by arms and believed in arms. Almost the first wish he ever expressed to me was that the American government would allow him to send some Chinese lads to Annapolis and West Point, and it was hard to explain that the doors to these academies might open to Japanese and young gentlemen from South America, but not to Chinamen. It was his assured purpose, he told me, to have in China schools modelled upon the West Point and Annapolis principles, and he had gone so far as to have selected some point on the Yangtze near Nanking for the military and Chefoo for the naval station.

The incentive to these purposes was the war with France. This sad, mournful business, known in France as "the Tonquin incident," did more than any other agency to bring about the new life in China. I had bitter feelings on the subject at the time of the war, but I feel that I am speaking the better opinion of France when I say that nothing could have been more unfortunate for the republic. In every respect so causeless, so selfish, so much a violation of the elementary principles of international honesty, so indefensible from any point of view, its injustice sank deep into the Chinese mind, and injured every foreign interest in the empire. The fatuity of the French was shown in nothing so much as in sending as one of their representatives, with special plenipotentiary powers, a gentleman who had "won distinction in Egypt." To suppose that a political education acquired among the fellaheen of the Nile and Levantine merchants would avail against the subtle rulers of a most patient people, of a race upon whom the severest blows of conquerors who had almost conquered the world had made no more impression than so many blows upon the impalpable waves, foreshadowed the discomfiture of France. Although with the moral support of Germany, upon the astute Bismarck theory that the more Frenchmen there were in the swamps of Tonquin the fewer there would be on the Rhine; with the strong support of England, based upon the masterful, earnest character of England's great minister, Sir Harry Parkes; with Russia in sympathy, the paw of the bear slowly moving prone towards Corea,

with no aid but the indirect moral support of the United States, to whom the autonomy of China was of more concern than the political exigencies of Jules Ferry,—France was worsted. With that victory came the renaissance. I remember the eloquent fervor with which Li Hung Chang on one occasion summed up the situation ; remember well his arraignment of foreign policies towards China, his resentment even towards American opinion,—the only time his temper ever led him upon that theme,—and his resolution to work without pausing until when China spoke it would be as other nations—with the hand on the hilt of the sword.

It was my duty about this time to make a tour of the open ports of China and inspect the consulates. There were public reasons—as much as any others the temper shown by the Viceroy—why special courtesies should be interchanged with the minor officials in the empire. The late Admiral John Lee Davis accompanied me, to that end, on board of the “Enterprise” man-of-war. At Canton, Foochow, Hankow, and other points there were functions given by us in honor of viceregal and other authorities. When possible, these assumed the form of a reception on board the man-of-war, men at general quarters, a drill, an inspection of the ship. Thus we would show something of our naval armaments, what discipline could do, what China perhaps might have to fear in the event of war. Among other such exhibitions was one at Shanghai before Li Hung Chang, at which His Excellency assisted for a couple of hours, and was shown every naval possibility. At Ningpo we entertained an official, his grade subordinate to that of a Viceroy, an amiable and able mandarin who studied the drill of the “Enterprise,” and heard with satisfaction the admiral’s exposition of the functions and the power and sweep of his artillery. We returned the call in state—admiral and staff in full dress—and were received with those delicate attentions which the Chinese know so well how to bestow. Ceremonies well under way, the mandarin asked the admiral if he would like to inspect the Chinese troops and see them drill. An infantry battalion was put through the manual of arms ; English the word of command, English tactics, the drill elaborate and minute, embracing all that was required of an infantry soldier. To the eyes of the writer, a layman, nothing seemed more perfect as a bit of mechanism, alertness, skill, obedience, intelligence—a human machine, as the drilled battalion

should be. To the admiral it came as a revelation. "To think," he said to me afterwards, "that I actually gave that Chinaman a drill on board my ship to show how the thing was done, and now he gives me a drill to show me that his soldiers know more than my people could teach them." This, Admiral Davis said, was the most impressive incident he had seen in China.

What that conscientious and distinguished officer saw at Ningpo, what made this morning drill in the quadrangle of a Chinese Yamen impressive, was this: Here before him was the unit. Here around him were the infinite possibilities to which that unit might multiply. The military unit in Germany, in France, in the United States—we know what may come of that. But what imagination dare conceive to what this Chinese unit might grow from the infinite resources of this prodigious empire, once that its faculty of growth turned, like that of its neighbors, towards war?

Some of the possibilities of this military unit, as we saw it, may be understood when we remember the part the ancestors of these soldiers have played in the affairs of men. When England was resting under papal interdicts and King John was content to be a papal vassal, the armies of Genghis Khan were surging over China where Li Hung Chang now reigns; over Honan and the countries of the Upper Yangtze; over Shangtung, the cradle of Confucius, to threaten India, and hold Asia Minor. Under another chief of the same race, even his grandson, Timour, Persia and Asia Minor were conquered, Syria occupied, Moscow threatened, India invaded, Delhi taken, and even Europe menaced with invasion. The two most important events since the Christian era—that is to say, the Mongol invasion under Genghis Khan in the thirteenth and of Timour in the fourteenth century, with, among other consequences, the Turkish occupation of eastern Europe—had an illustration in the Yamen of Ningpo. They were of the seed from which had come the harvest of terror, conquest, and rapine. The soldiers whose bearing and drill excited the wonder of an American admiral were of the race which had marched from Peking to the Danube. Behind them were over four hundred millions. The admiral felt the presence of a military power that could well become greater than that of combined Europe—of a power which, unlike that of Europe, was dis-

turbed neither by dynastic troubles nor the abrasions of contending races, but homogeneous, docile, brave, with the same religion, manners, and customs, serving the one master, not with that perfunctory sentiment in some countries called loyalty to a flag, and in others loyalty to a family, but serving him as a master, sacred, supreme, to them the Lord of the universe, the very Son of Heaven.

Truly, as Mr. Delane said, "The coming question will be Asiatic. It belongs to the next generation." "It may be that the oldest and the youngest of civilizations, face to face, America and China, will settle it, or it may come in some other form." Come it will! And no one could have stood in that quadrangle at Ningpo without feeling that again, as before, Europe might anticipate from Asia another of those movements which have changed the face of empires and menaced the dignity of civilization.

JOHN RUSSELL YOUNG.